

## **March 21, 2016, BLT Agenda Item Comments**

Comments on the Newport Beach Board of Library Trustees (BLT) agenda items submitted by:

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### ***Item V.A. Minutes of the February 16, 2016 Board of Library Trustees Meeting***

The proposed minutes do not appear to be provided in the agenda packet. Therefore it is impossible for me to provide any advance comments on them.

### ***Item 2. Library Activities***

Under the Director's report, it is commendable that staff plans a retreat to refine its vision for the future direction of the library, and that they will be creating and posting a customer survey. However it seems important that the Board, and through it the public, have involvement in this process. In particular, it would seem essential that the Board review and comment on the survey before it is posted so that it will include, in a collaborative way, carefully targeted questions both staff and the Board want answers to.

In regard to such visioning efforts, Planning Division staff recently asked the Council for authorization to begin a process of updating the City's [General Plan](#), last comprehensively revised 10 years ago, in 2006. Although Planning will reportedly be focusing on the *Circulation* and *Safety Elements*, and the *Land Use Element* policies, the Board may wish to consider suggesting changes to the *Arts and Cultural Element* ([Chapter 9](#)) and the *Implementation Programs* ([Chapter 13](#)) related to that element, including better defining the role of the Board and its vision for meeting future library needs. The *Arts and Cultural Element* of the General Plan is not quite the same as a strategic plan for the future of the library, but, weak as it is, it seems the closest we have at the moment – and could call for the development of a more detailed plan.

### ***Item 3. Expenditure Status Report***

The report says it shows expenditures "As of 3/1/16." If that is correct, there would be four months of the 12 month budget cycle left, meaning that for items with steady expenditures, two-thirds should have been spent with one-third still to come – or put another way, the "Available budget" should be one-half the "YTD expenditures." In view of this, it seems strange that many of what one would think are steady expenses, including such things as the Salaries & Benefits item, show expenditures as of March 1<sup>st</sup> that have consumed less than two-thirds of the Revised Budget (that is, with more than half the YTD expenditures remaining). Is the time represented actually less current than March 1<sup>st</sup>? Or does the library expect to end the year with a surplus that will be returned to the City's general fund?

#### ***Item 4. Board of Library Trustees Monitoring List***

The “Election of Board of Library Trustees Officers” normally happens at the first meeting in July, which this year will be July 18<sup>th</sup>. It’s not clear why it isn’t so indicated.

#### ***Item 5. Balboa Branch Library Report***

Staff has provided an excellent report on the status of the branch.

The report raises these questions:

1. Is Balboa staff aware of the Public Works/Finance Department proposal to downsize the branch to 3,000 square feet when it is rebuilt in a few years (in part to provide room for expansion of the fire station next door)? If so, does it have any opinion about the adequacy of a smaller facility?
2. When will a needs assessment be conducted to guide the future reconstruction of the branch?
3. Why is the 3D Blu-ray collection “unique to Balboa”? Is this a format of interest only to residents in that area?

#### ***Item 6. Media Lab Update***

Since no advance report has been provided in the agenda packet it is difficult to comment on this.

#### ***Item 7. Library Material Selection and Downloadable Services***

I have made comments on collection development in past years. Since no advance report has been provided in the agenda packet it seems pointless to elaborate.

#### ***Item 8. Corona del Mar Branch Project Update***

1. Have any changes been made to the construction plans? Has the Board and public seen the latest version?
2. Regarding the \$65,000 of gifts from the community that has been “*allocated for the new Branch facility*,” what exactly has it been allocated for? And where will it appear in the library budget? As with the following item, the process is less than clear whereby library donations get encumbered for specific uses so they are not in danger of being returned to the City’s general fund if not spent by the end of the fiscal year.

***Item 9. Donations to the Library***

1. As to the \$2,500 gift for purchasing “*materials in subject field of religion/spirituality*,” the Board may wish to confirm that the donation is not restricted to promoting a particular religion. If it were, it might be in conflict with the establishment clauses of the US and California Constitutions, and the Board might not want to accept it.
2. As alluded to in the previous comment, the process by which unspent donation amounts are held so that they are not at risk of being swept into the City’s general fund at the end of the fiscal year is less than clear. It might be wise to ask the Council to establish dedicated capital improvement like funds into which library donations could be placed, and from which funds could be removed only for the stated purposes (with some flexibility if the original purpose becomes impossible or irrelevant).